



## Tiny frog species discovered (and this photographer gets one named after him!)

February 27, 2017 [JAYMI HEIMBUCH](#)



Photo: [SD Biju](#)

Frog species are disappearing worldwide, so news about these amphibians tends to be dire. So it's refreshing to see a set of seven new species of teensy, tiny frogs discovered.

According to [PhysOrg](#):

Scientists from India have discovered seven new frog species belonging to the genus *Nyctibatrachus*, commonly known as Night Frogs. This find is a result of five years of extensive explorations in the Western Ghats global biodiversity hotspot in India. Four out of seven of the new species are miniature-sized frogs (12.2-15.4 mm), which can comfortably sit on a coin or a thumbnail. These are among the smallest known frogs in the world.

The tiny frogs have likely been overlooked because of their extraordinarily small size. They also tend to hide under leaf litter, rather than at a stream's edge like so many other frog species. They also have insect-like calls, which may have contributed to them going unnoticed for so long.

One of the seven species is named after conservation photographer Robin Moore, whose work we have chronicled from a successful effort to [save a Jamaican island](#) from development to his [search to rediscover "lost" frog species](#). Moore's dedication to amphibian conservation is inspiring and it's no wonder he has been honored with a newly discovered species as his namesake.

We caught up with him to ask what has been going through his head since he got the news.

### **MNN: What does this find mean for the study of frogs and biodiversity?**

**Robin Moore:** New species discoveries are a refreshing antidote to the tide of species extinctions because they remind us just how wonderful and diverse our world is, and how much there is left for us to discover and to fight to save. Taxonomists like SD Biju [who led the [new study](#)] are becoming as endangered as the species they discover and describe, but their work is important because it informs where and what we protect. In order to preserve biological diversity we need to know what exists. And the size of these frogs is incredible — these are some of the smallest living tetrapods in the world, and are at the limit of what is physiologically possible.

### **How confident are you that the new find might help frog conservation worldwide?**

In the land of tigers, it is wonderful to see attention given to the smaller creatures! These creatures keep the ecosystems running. The Western Ghats is one of the world's biodiversity hot spots, but the landscape is also transforming, and the homes of many species are threatened. One of the newly discovered species, for instance, lives close to the site of a proposed mega hydroelectric project. By elevating the profile of these frogs, each presented to the world as a beautiful portrait, Biju is creating flagships for conservation — creatures behind which we can rally to save vital ecosystems. They help us to put a face on the issues that affect us all.

### **What was your reaction to having a species named after you?**

When I found out, I felt incredibly honored. It's one of those things I think we all secretly (sometimes not so secretly) dream about as the ultimate bucket list item, but I honestly never really imagined having a beautiful living being named in my honor. It's really special.

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Though the discovery is exciting, the newly discovered species already need protection. Some of the species are found in areas under imminent threat of development. The modification or fragmentation of the habitat could mean these species disappear so soon after being discovered.

All the newly described species are currently known only from single localities in the southern Western Ghats, and some lie outside Protected areas. Researchers found the Radcliffe's night frog and the Kadalar night frog inside private or state-owned plantation areas facing threats such as habitat disturbance, modification and fragmentation.

You can help protect frog species by checking out the nonprofit conservation organizations [Global Wildlife Conservation](#) and [Amphibian Survival Alliance](#).